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5. "Speech Tones." By Professor Alexander Melville Bell, Washington, D. C.

Professor C. H. Grandgent :

I am very glad indeed that Prof. Bell has called attention to this important feature of human speech, a feature which has been generally neglected hitherto, probably on account of its difficulty. Something, however, has been done in the way of the exposition of the melodies peculiar to different languages. For French a particularly interesting specimen of notation appeared in *Phonetische Studien*, II, 3. I had copies of that struck off and used in one of the schools of Boston, the air being played on the piano; the pupils first sang with notes and then changed their singing to speaking. The result was extremely happy.

As has been said, a given combination of slides may convey quite different meanings in different languages. For instance, certain inflections of the voice will not suggest to the Anglo-Saxon the meaning which they convey to the Italian. The way of asking a question in Tuscany is very perplexing to foreigners who do not recognize the function of the slide there used for that purpose. Some ten years ago I studied the Tuscan inflections with the aid of a piano, and tried to note the most important principles. I was then struck by the strange similarity between Tuscan and Irish intonations. The Irish inflections are, as you know, different from ordinary English or American. For example, in a statement, we say: "I saw him yesterday," with the falling inflection; but an Irishman is likely to use the level tone. In asking a question not to be answered by yes or no, we again use the falling inflection: "Where are you going?" The Irishman uses the circumflex with a long fall and short rise. The inquiry has the same intonation in Tuscany. In questions which can be answered by yes or no, the simple rising inflection is used in America: "Have you seen him?" The Irishman says: "Did you see him?" with a rise and a very short fall; and so says the Italian.

As far as I can judge from hearing the paper read, it seems to me that the system is an excellent one for the purpose that Prof. Bell has in view. The extent of the rise or fall could be indicated by the length of the lines; and, with some method of measuring accurately the distance which the voice rises or falls, we should have an ideal plan of notation.

The discussion was continued by Professors A. M. Elliott, M. D. Learned, S. Garner, J. D. Bruner, and Adolphe Cohn.

[Professor Bell announced that his paper, which was to be dedicated to the National Association of Elocutionists, would soon be printed, and that he would take pleasure in sending a

copy of it to each member of the Modern Language Association. This generous promise, which was warmly received, has in the meantime been fulfilled.]

6. "A Study and Notation of American Vowels." By Professor E. H. Babbitt, of Columbia College.

Professor C. H. Grandgent :

We cannot expect to have a final scheme of vowel notation which shall be both simple and scientifically correct, until we understand better than we do the nature of vowel sounds. The plan of Jespersen is accurate but exceedingly complicated. Other systems in common use are easy and practical, but do not take into account all the different factors that enter into the production of vowels.

I am very much interested in the experiments begun by Mr. Lloyd, of Liverpool, who has developed a theory of speech sounds, according to which the distinctive character of every vowel is due to the relation between the pitches of two mouth-cavities, one before the tongue and one behind it. He has carried out his experiments successfully for the front vowels, but has not completed them for all. Until his work is done, and perhaps even longer, we shall have to put up with temporary schemes ; and the method proposed by Mr. Babbitt is certainly better, for American dialect work, than anything else I have ever seen. It enables the investigator to represent clearly and with sufficient accuracy, on a square inch of paper, the entire vowel system of any American speaker.

Mr. Babbitt spoke incidentally of American nasal vowels. I should like to say a word with regard to American and French nasals. Those of us who have taught French are aware that those Americans who nasalize to the greatest extent in their own language are the ones who find it hardest to pronounce the French nasals. The reason is this: American nasality is due to closure of the mouth and inertia of the soft palate. Most Americans speak with the soft palate hanging down a little, leaving a small opening into the nasal passage, and with their mouths almost shut, so that most of the air is forced up through this narrow crack and comes out of the nostrils. That gives the stifled nasal quality with which we are familiar. The French nasals, however, are pronounced with the mouth wide open and the soft palate drawn far forward, so that the air, coming up from the larynx, goes freely into the nasal passage, arouses the resonance of the nasal cavity, and then escapes fully as much through the mouth as through the nose. Americans, not in the habit of using the soft palate, experience difficulty in drawing the veil far enough forward to give the full nasal resonance ; and, at the same time, they find it hard to make the mouth-aperture large